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**Wiki Assignment #1**

I would define “Action Research” as a type of investigation. The process would involve the act of identifying an issue, stating it as a problem, examining prior research regarding the topic, stating a research hypothesis and implementing an intervention strategy. The culminating process would include measuring the results to determine whether the intervention had any influence, positive or negative, over the problem.

* **Defining the Problem-** The problem I would like to investigate involves students with behavioral problems and effective ways for the teacher to mediate using art as a vehicle. Many classroom teachers spend much of instructional time on classroom management and trying to handle students with behavioral issues such as ADHD and ODD within a general education classroom setting. The problem I would like to address is “Is art therapy an effective way to manage students with behavioral problems in a general education classroom setting?”
* **Is it researchable?** Art Therapy is a growing field and has gained wide acceptance as a viable tool to use in the therapeutic and healing processes. Art therapy has been used as a medium to assist students with special needs, physical and mental disabilities and students with behavioral problems such as ADHD and ODD. Because art therapy is often chosen as a natural remedy to help students with behavior problems, the amount of literature on the subject is extensive.
* **Prior Research (2 sources)** There is a significant amount of research regarding the use of art as therapy, beginning in 1961 when the first journal was published in the Bulletin of Art Therapy (which is now the American Journal of Art Therapy). Art therapists document the various exercises used with clients in order to see what was successful and what was not. One source that I came across was written by art therapist Vicky Barber, *Art Therapy and the Child*. In the article, Barber discusses how art exercises are valuable in accessing a child’s emotions and problems in unique and creative way. Art Therapy differs from a traditional art class in that it is not about a beautiful end product but rather about the process and the experience the child has when creating it. Another source, which addresses a study conducted on 93 children (42 in the experimental group and 51 and in the control group) and uses art as a vehicle for academic assistance, is an article by Rita Freilich et al found in the journal *Arts in Psychotherapy*. The article is titled “The Contribution of Art Therapy to the Social, Emotional, and Academic Adjustment of Children with Learning Disabilities. The article chronicles a study in which two intervention types were implemented and then compared based on the children’s experiences.
* **Pros and Cons (2 sources)** One source that supports the idea that art therapy is a successful tool in behavior intervention is an article entitled “Art Therapy for Children: How it Leads to Change,” by Diane Waller. The article discusses how change occurs as a result of participation in the arts. Waller shares various case studies of putting art therapy into practice with students and enabling them to convey feelings that they cannot put into words. On the other hand, Art Therapy as a field, is constantly under pressure to prove its benefits by becoming more “evidence-based.” In order to do this, first an art therapist must establish what constitutes “evidence.” There lies a debate on this subject, as there are many different definitions to what “evidence” means. As with any scientific field, research is needed to prove its validity. Evidence to prove the efficacy of art therapy is lacking and therefore makes it the subject of ridicule. An advocate for art therapy as an evidence-based practice is **Kimberly Hoagwood as demonstrated in the article entitled,** “Evidence-Based Practice in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.”
* **Current Instructional Strategies (2 sources)** Current instructional strategies include individual and group projects. Students may be asked to keep a visual journal, contribute to group collages and work with scribbles as spontaneous imagery. Students are often encouraged to explore various materials or find one that is suitable for the environment in which the art making is taking place. In addition to these strategies, Cathy A. Malchiodi, in The Art Therapy Sourcebook, cites other instructional strategies. Other types of instructional methods can be found in, “Managing Traumatic Stress Through Art,” by Barry M. Cohen, Mary-Michola Barnes and Anita B. Rankin.
* **Practitioners/Theorists (2 sources)** Margaret Naumburg is considered the woman who pioneered the field of Art Therapy and wrote several books on the subject. Her work as an educator and therapist was greatly influential to ideas about creativity and mental health. Another one of Art Therapy’s leading practitioners is Edith Kramer, who has authored many papers and books regarding the field as well as founded the Art Therapy graduate program at NYU.
* **Proposed Intervention (1 source)** My proposed intervention would be to identify 3-5 students with behavioral problems in a general education classroom. I would focus on students who have trouble focusing, sitting still or following directions. I will introduce a “group project” to the students and explain to them that when they are having trouble focusing and/or being disruptive to the class, they are allowed to work independently on the group project. The art project will consist of a large scale collage, made up of each students work and then when completed, the piece will be cut up into puzzle-like pieces for each student to keep. The collage will have a general theme for which the students to base their collages on. The theme could be anything from friendship, nature, or the student’s favorite season, which would allow them to focus their excess energy on something positive. The student will be limited to working on the project for no longer than 5 minutes at a time. The art supplies will be set up in close proximity to the board in which the collage paper is taped to. All of the materials including the collage itself, will be easily transportable so it will be able to shift in case in interferes with classroom space. This intervention will also allow students to work independently while contributing to a group project. I will monitor these student’s progress and reactions to the art process and compare them to other students with similar behavior problems in another class of the same grade level.
* **How will you define (construct) and measure your intervention? (Dependent variable)** Results will be measured by changes or improvements in the majority of the students’ behavior. I will create a behavioral checklist consisting of components that are desired and undesired. Improvements can be measured by the student’s response to the art making process as well as the teacher’s response to the student’s behavior.
* **References**

“Art Therapy.” *Wikipedia*. January 2011

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